

Hillandale

News

No 192 June 1993





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Tuesday 31 August 1993

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Hillandale News

The Official Journal of The City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society

Founded in 1919

Patrons: Oliver Berliner and Kathleen Darby



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Front cover illustration: Edison Bell Showcase c.1926/1927. See Ruth Lambert's article on page 242

CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

In the February 1993 edition of *Hillandale News*, Tom Stephenson wrote kindly of my recent academic success. However, in summing up the sources I had used whilst researching, he made one small but significant error. I did indeed have the pleasure of meeting and talking with John McCormack's daughter, but unfortunately not with the daughter of Fred Gaisberg. As Fred never married or had children, it was simply not possible for me to meet his daughter!

What Tom intended to say was that I had met Miss Kathleen Darby, the daughter of that other great recording engineer from the pioneering days, William Sinkler Darby. Darby, like Gaisberg was an American, brought up in Washington DC. He had been trained in the art of sound recording during the 1890s by the inventor of the gramophone Emile Berliner. William Sinkler Darby came to Europe in 1899 and he took the first disc records in Russia. Between 1900 and 1920, Darby, like his more famous friend Gaisberg, recorded for The Gramophone Company Ltd. the art of the greatest performing artistes active at that time. Technically, he was the most skilled of the engineers employed by The Gramophone Company, and in 1912, he became head of the Company's new research laboratory in London.

When I first visited Kathleen, she told me of her worries concerning the future of her father's remaining papers. These included diaries, photographs and sound records. After discussing the matter with Ruth Edge, Archivist at E.M.I. Music Archives, I introduced them to each other. As a result of that meeting, the Darby Collection is now lodged at Hayes, where it joins Darby's other papers and records.

My purpose in mentioning this is to tell you that Kathleen Darby, now a valued friend of Peter Adamson and myself, and known to a number of other Society members, has kindly accepted our invitation to become the Society's second patron. The Society's first patron, Oliver Berliner, grandson of Emile Berliner, joins George Frow, our President and me in warmly welcoming Kathleen as our second patron, and we look forward to seeing her at our meetings for many years to come.

Please note that material intended for inclusion in *Hillandale News* must reach the Editor not later than **six weeks before the first day of the month of issue.**

Hence the deadline for the **August** issue will be **15th June 1993.**

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Views expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor.

PROBLEMS WITH THE EDISON OPERA

by Mike Field

The 1912 Edison Opera is considered to be the pinnacle of the development of the cylinder phonograph. As such it is coveted by both cylinder enthusiasts and machine collectors but when the prized possession is first played, there is sometimes disappointment in store. Although the mechanism appears to run quietly and smoothly, the reproduction may not be all that is to be expected of such a superb machine. A not uncommon problem is the manifestation of 'flutter' which results in a wavering or watery reproduction. The effect is particularly noticeable on the voice or sustained notes.

Flutter is a rapid fluctuation and is not to be confused with slower changes in the mandrel speed - in modern terms 'wow' - which might be the result of a loose cylinder or unlubricated springs. There are several possible causes of flutter in the Opera but the most likely is the governor and its drive. The illustration shows a sketch of the relevant components.

Governor drive

The governor drive gear was made in brass or fibre. If this gear is damaged or out of true it will be a prime cause of trouble. The fibre version is vulnerable and one or more teeth may be deformed or chipped. It may also be deformed, due to swelling caused by over enthusiastic application of the oil can to the gear wheel itself resulting in the wheel running out of true. Proving the gear wheel is deformed may entail the use of instruments but often close inspection while the machine is running will show the problem. The brass version is less likely to be troublesome, but if it is physically damaged it will be easy to spot. So the first thing in the investigation is to examine the drive gear.

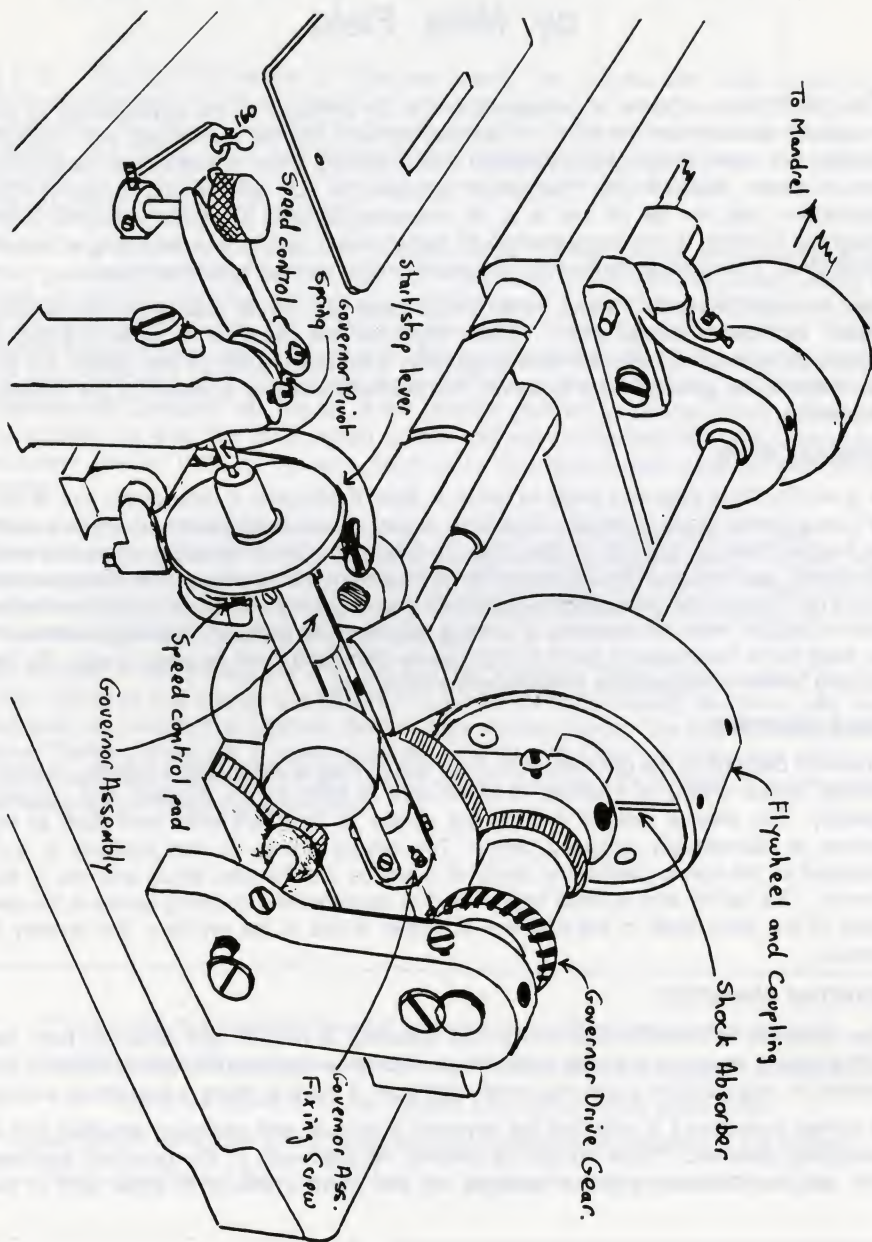
Shock absorber

To prevent damage to the governor due to an abrupt stop at the end of a cylinder, a shock absorber in the shape of a length of piano wire is fitted to the flywheel and coupling assembly. The wire is passed through the centre of the drive shaft and fixed to the flywheel at diametrically opposed points. The kinetic energy in the flywheel is thus dissipated in the spring (within the limits of a slot in the flywheel boss) and not in the governor. The spring wire is often broken and in consequence coupling between the two halves of the drive shaft in the flywheel is erratic. If this is the problem, the remedy is obvious.

Governor assembly

If the governor is correctly assembled and adjusted, a ring of light reflected from the weights should trace out a steady circle. There should be no apparent wobble either in the diameter or axial position of the ring of reflected light. If there is, there is something wrong.

For correct operation it is vital that the governor runs true, with minimum end float and is dynamically balanced. There should be virtually no slackness in the governor bearings which can be checked by gently applying up and down pressure to either end of the



assembly. Movement should be imperceptible. (Note: Care is needed to ensure that end float is not confused with up and down movement.) If significant slackness is apparent, the governor pivots need to be replaced and the governor shaft ends refurbished. The governor shaft itself is unlikely to be out of true but if this suspected it will be necessary to remove the complete governor from the machine, take off the weight and collar assembly (held by one screw in the boss nearest to the drive gear) and check the shaft for 'run out' either in a lathe or possibly on a flat surface. When replacing the assembly try to ensure that it is replaced in the same position on the shaft to minimise the necessity to reset the speed indicator. There must be some end float of the complete governor between its pivots but too much can be almost as bad as too little. Adjust the position of the pivots, if necessary, to obtain about 1/64 inch.

Dynamic balance of the governor cannot be achieved if the weights and springs are not identical or if the fixing screws are loose. Any gross disparity in the springs or weights can be seen by inspection but to be sure the thickness of the springs should be checked with a micrometer and the weights weighed and measured. Make sure that the position of the weight in relation to its spring is the same for all three; some springs are not symmetrical about the weight fixing position. The springs should be virtually flat at rest and if there is any undue 'set', they should be replaced.

Speed control mechanism

There are two speed control pads mounted in brass stirrup which bear on the surface of the disc at the end of the governor assembly. These pads should be soft and reasonably pliable and should be sparingly oiled (preferably with a vegetable oil). The stirrup itself must be free to rotate. The surface of the discs where the pads touch should be clean and smooth to prevent any 'grabbing' action. While the speed control handle sets the speed, the spring on the shaft connecting the control knob and fork to the stirrup holding the pads keeps the pressure constant. If this spring is broken erratic operation will result.

The above ideas are offered as possible causes of 'watery' reproduction with the Opera and have some application to machines with similar drive mechanisms such as the Amberolas B1 and B3. The list is not claimed to be complete nor does it not cover possible reproducer defects.

THE NOSTALGIA RECORD FAIR

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GENERAL ADMISSION 70p from 11.30 am

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MORE PERSONALITIES BEHIND THE NAMES ON THE LABELS - Part 3

by Frank Andrews

No.8 Andrew Black - baritone

Born on January 15th 1859, Black's musical career was embarked upon as a church organist but he early became a student singer under the tutelage of teacher of singing, Albert Randegger, followed by studying in Milan under Domenico Scafati.

His first successful engagement was at a Crystal Palace Concert. From then on his career progressed to become one of the foremost baritones of the day by the time of the outbreak of war in 1914.

His participation in the Leeds Festival, in Yorkshire in 1892, was the first of his many later provincial engagements. He sang in Mendelssohn's *Elijah* in Birmingham in 1894 and appeared at numerous venues throughout the U.K. He also went on tour to the 'Australasian Colonies'. Andrew Black recorded on cylinders for Pathé in London and on discs for The Gramophone and Type-writer Ltd. and for the Columbia Phonograph Co. Gen'l., some of the latter's being 'stencilled' as Rena Double Face Records also. He appeared on Pathé discs.

No.9 Helen(a) Blain - contralto

On the vertical 'vee-cut' Marathon records Helen Blain was described as *The Scottish Contralto*. She was born in Dunblane, Perthshire (at an undiscovered date) and was educated at a village school in Scotland. She came to London to prepare for a career in singing and studied under Herman Klein at the Guildhall of Music.

She had her debut at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden in 1906 and was later engaged to sing at the Henry Wood

Promenade Concerts and at Messrs. Chappell's Ballad Concerts.

In 1910 she gave her own orchestral concert, with Sir Henry Wood's Orchestra, in the Queen's Hall, London W. She was engaged at the Royal Albert Hall Symphony Concerts of 1913 and also appeared on the bill at a Madame Tetrassini concert in 1914.

Her first recordings were on Marathon records and subsequently she was to be had under the Pathé label., both edge-start and centre start, on Regal, Columbia and Homochord; the latter derived from Pathé masters.

No.10 Robert Burnett - baritone

This singer was born in Lasswade, in the county of Midlothian, Scotland. His first studies were with Signor Raie, Albert Randegger and Andrew Black. He first made an appearance, as a bass, with the Edinburgh Choral Union in a performance of Handel's *Messiah*.

He had principal engagements with the Queen's Hall Concerts, with Henry J. Wood's London Symphony Concerts and also appeared in concerts conducted by Dr Richter and other eminent conductors. He also performed at combined choral and orchestral concerts, his favourite roles being as Elijah in Mendelssohn's oratorio of that name, and as Mephistopheles in *The Damnation of Faust* by Berlioz.

His voice may be found on any of the following labelled discs: The Twin Double-Sided Disc Record, Zonophone Record, His Master's Voice, The Cinch Record, Pathé (edge start) and Ariel Grand Record (derived from Twin D-S Record masters).

No.11 Montague Borwell - baritone

Borwell was born in Eastville in Lincolnshire and married another singer, Winifred Marwood in 1900. His studies took place at the Guildhall School of Music under Walter Austin and Herman Klein. He appeared with many of the leading musical institutions. In London with the Henry Wood Queen's Hall Promenade Concerts and the Royal Choral Society Concerts, also at various symphony concerts. In the Provinces he sang in programmes given by the Royal Orchestral Society, in Glasgow at concerts with the Choral Union, in Ireland with the Belfast Philharmonic Society and in Dublin with that city's Orpheus Society's Concerts.

He was also engaged for concerts given in the Alexandra Palace, North London and in the Crystal Palace, South London.

For a number of years he was a chorister in the Westminster Abbey Choir and he had a principal position with the Lincoln's Inn Chapel Choir in London.

He was the author of a book *How to Sing*. Borwell had recordings issued on Berliner, Pathé Disc, Zonophone, Odeon, Beka Grand and Ariel Grand Records and also on Pathé cylinders.

No.12 Una Bourne - pianoforte

As one may guess from her name, Una Bourne was born in Melbourne in the State of Victoria in Australia. She made her debut in England, in 1913, visiting the provinces on a Dame Nellie Melba tour, having toured with Melba in Australia during the years 1907, 1908, 1909 and 1912.

In 1914 she gave very successful recitals in Germany at the beginning of year. She visited Berlin, Dresden and Leipzig. She gave a Royal Command performance at Buckingham Palace at the behest of Queen Mary.

On her departure from Australia for England, circa 1914, she was awarded a diamond

pendant at a public presentation. As far as I know Una Bourne only recorded for The Gramophone Co. Ltd. and had her recordings issued on the His Master's Voice label.

No.13 York Bowen - pianist and composer

Bowen was born on February 22nd 1884 in London where he died in 1961. Taking up a musical career, he studied for two years at Blackheath Conservatoire under Alfred Izard. He won a Sterndale Bennett scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music where he was able to study piano with Tobias Matthay and composition with Frederick Corder for five years. He also had other tutors at the Royal Academy of Music where he was appointed a sub-professor and a Fellow. He gained three distinctive medals, one from the Musicians Company, the Charles Lucas Corporation Medal and the W. Macfarren Gold Medal, the latter two associated with the Royal Academy of Music.

Before World War One Bowen had a concerto of his performed at a Philharmonic Society concert and had three piano concerti performed at the Queen's Hall, London.

I have only come across his recordings on the A.F.M.C. (The Anglo-French Music Co. Ltd.) label and Vocalion Records of the Vocalion Gramophone Co. Ltd.

No.14 Harrison Brockbank - baritone and actor

Brockbank, who was born in St.Helen's, Lancashire on October 2nd 1867, was educated at Cowley's School. He originally studied painting as a vehicle for a future career but, it having been discovered that he had a good voice, he began studying under Signor Franco Leoni. He joined A. Pously's Opera Company in 1887 and made his first stage appearance in Balfe's *The Bohemian Girl*. He sang at the Harrison/Patti Concerts and was with a Signor Leigo (or Seigo?)

during his Lyceum Theatre Opera season in 1892. As a result of being heard in a *Faust* recital, Augustus Harris, who at the time controlled both the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane and the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, engaged Brockbank to sing at both theatres for two seasons.

He next appeared in Comic Opera, with *Ma Mie Rosette* and other productions, in both London and the provinces, his most successful role being in *The Little Genius* at The Shaftesbury Theatre, London in 1897.

He also had engagements for George Edwardes at Daly's Theatre, London and was taken on by Dundas Slater, manager at The Alhambra, London, where he sang Kipling's *Absent-Minded Beggar* at the start of the Boer War in South Africa.

His career continued with Pantomimes, Variety Theatre and Musical Comedies. He was the lyricist for the show *The Freebooter* and *The Swell Mob* and wrote other popular songs.

He recorded on Edison Gold Moulded 2 minute cylinders and on Nicole Records and is also to be found on Sovereign Records of 1907.

No.15 Jessie Broughton - contralto

The daughter of Broughton Black, Jessie was born in London in 1885. A pupil Madame Oudin (or Ocedin?) at the beginning of her musical life her first engagement came with the George Edwardes' productions at the Apollo Theatre, London where she appeared in *Madame Cherry* and in Messenger's *Véronique*.

At the re-opening of the Empire Theatre, London, it was she who sang the National Anthem; she remained at the theatre throughout 1905 and 1906 as a solo vocalist.

A *nom-de-disque* of Jessie is Agnes Preston. Her voice can be heard on a great number of recordings, both cylinder and disc. So far I have traced her on the following makes of record: Ariel Grand Record, Albion Record,

Apollo Green Label Record, Beka Grand and Beka Meister Records, Clarion Record, Coliseum Record, Columbia Double-Face Record, Curry Cycle Co. Gramophone Record, Dacapo Record, Diploma Record, Edison Bell Velvet Face Records (1st and 2nd series), Edison Gold Moulded Cylinder record, Famous Record, Favorite Record, Homochord (1st and 2nd series), Homophone Record (or Company), Indestructible Phonographic Record Co.'s cylinder records, John Bull Record, Jumbo Record, Kalliope Record, Klingsor Record, Odeon Record, Parlophone, Pelican Record, Pilot Record, Polyphon record, Scala Record, Scala de Luxe (1st series), Scala Ideal (1st series), Stella Record, Venus Record, Victory Record (10"), The Winner and Zonophone Record.

No.16 Clara Butterworth - soprano

Clara Butterworth was born in Manchester, England and began her singing career by studying vocal art under the tutelage of Mme. Agnes Larkoom at the Royal Academy of Music, London in which she took an associate membership. She made her concert debut at the Queen's hall, London in 1907 and went on to sing at the Henry Wood Queen's Hall Promenade Concerts, Chapell's Ballad Concerts and the Royal Orchestral Amateur Concerts. She appeared at the more important musical venues, including the Royal Albert Hall, The Crystal Palace etc.

She was frequently invited to sing before members of the Royal Family. She married Montague F. Phillips, an organist and the composer of *The Rebel Maid* among many other works. She made recordings for His Master's Voice, Columbia Records and Aeolian Vocalion Records.

No.17 Doris Carter - soprano

Miss Carter was born on October 13th 1887 in Melbourne in the State of Victoria, Aus-

tralia and was educated at Melbourne High School.

In 1902 she secured the Gold Medal for her singing at the Melbourne Exhibition. She trained and studied under Armes Beaumont and made her debut at a Melba concert in 1903, at the Melbourne Town Hall. She made her first London appearance in 1910 in October and subsequently appeared in many principal concerts promoted in many parts of the U. K.

The only labels to carry her voice in British issues were Beka Meister Record, Scala De Luxe Record and Scala Ideale (12") Record.

No.18 Amy Castle - soprano

This soprano was born on 24th July 1884 in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia and was educated at the Convent of Mary, Bendigo. She was only in her 16th year when she made her first public appearance at the Austral Salon in Melbourne, under the auspices of Lord and Lady Brassey, in 1899.

Before leaving for London she appeared in three concerts at the Melbourne Exhibition which, it was reported, secured her £6,000.

Her first London appearance was at the Queen's Hall in London in 1901. In 1902 she travelled to France where she remained for three years completing her musical tuition in Paris, under Jacques Bouchy's guidance.

She re-appeared in London, in 1905, performing at the Queen's hall and in many other venues staging concerts in the U. K. She also undertook extensive tours.

No.19 Arthur Catterall - violinist

Mr Catterall was born in Preston, Lancashire, in 1883 and died sixty years later. His first tutor was his musician father and he was proficiently enough advanced to give his first public performance at 6 years of age. He continued to give public concerts for the next three years, still under the tutelage of his father.

In 1892 he became a pupil of Willy Hess, who was then chief violinist of the Hallé Orchestra. Hess was also on the staff of the Royal Manchester College of Music, where Catterall became a pupil of Professor Adolf Brodsky, late of Moscow and Leipzig Conservatoires. Brodsky was also principal violinist of the Hallé Orchestra.

Dr Richter invited Catterall to Bayreuth where he played at Madame Wagner's house. He became leader of a number of orchestras, including The Queen's Hall Promenade Concerts Orchestra, The Hallé Orchestra and The BBC Symphony Orchestra. he also appeared at the London Stock Exchange Concerts. He later formed his own Catterall String Quartet and became a professor at the Royal Manchester School of Music.

The only labels I know Catterall to be on are His Master's Voice and Columbia.

*Exhibition of Gramophones at Macclesfield Museum
from 7th June to 11th July 1993.*

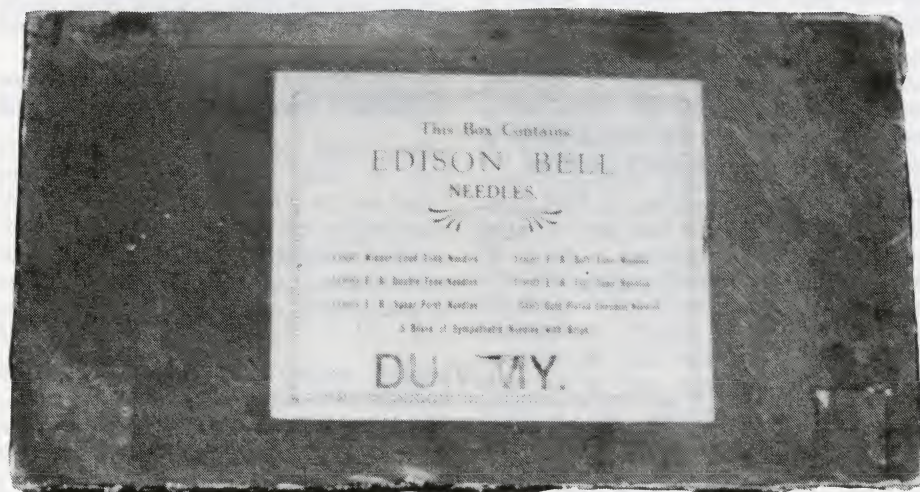
For further details contact Mr T. Cheetham on

EDISON BELL SHOWCASE - FROM ABOUT 1926 or 1927 by Ruth Lambert

This lovely and very rare showcase measures about fourteen inches by eight inches and is about three-quarters of an inch deep. The box is of red cardboard and contains 25 tin lids. Looks are deceptive because it doesn't contain the whole tins, just the lids, which originally were glued into place. As you can see from the photograph below it was a "dummy", perhaps for the shop window or on the counter. Listed on the lid is what it contained:

1000 Winner Loud Tone Needles.	1000 E.B.Soft Tone Needles.
1000 E.B.Double Tone Needles.	1000 E.B.Full Tone Needles.
1000 E.B.Spear Point Needles.	500 Gold Plated Chromium Needles.
5 Boxes of Sympathetic Needles with Grips.	

When one looks inside the lid, one finds suggestions on when to use each of the needles. These were probably on the shop counter for the customers' reference . Hence it is suggested one should use the "Double Tone", (the green tin) in large halls or outdoor use (very loud volume) or the "Full Tone", (pale blue tin) for an every day needle providing a general service .



The outside of the lid of the Edison Bell Showcase

DETAILS OF THE TINS

WINNER LOUD TONE. Big volume and a rich tone. 6d (2½ p today). "A low priced needle for general use".

EDISON BELL DOUBLE TONE. Green Tin. Very loud volume. 8d (3p today).

EDISON BELL SOFT TONE. Red tin. not in the right column. "Soft, sweet, mellow tone". 6d. The price has been altered on this tin, a square sticker with 6d on it.

EDISON BELL MEDIUM (FULL TONE). Pale blue tin. "Solid, clear and full tone" 6d.

EDISON BELL SPEAR POINT. Yellow tin. "A dual volumed". 9d (about 3.5p).

The price has also been altered. Also not in the correct column, it should be exchanged with the yellow spear point.

The last two columns of tins are the Chromic needles which enable you to control the volume of your gramophone:

EDISON BELL SYMPATHETIC CHROMIC. Brown tin which cost 2/6d (12½p) with the grip, and 1- (5p) just for the thin gold needles.

EDISON BELL SEMI-PERMANENT. Brown tin. "Plays 10 records at full volume". 1/3d (6p).

As mentioned some of the prices have been altered so when the prices changed the showcase was not thrown away as we would do today but just changed. Considering it was a cardboard box and not anything stronger this would be unheard of today.

Looking at the showcard from 1927 and the advert from 1931 I would guess that the showcase would date from around 1926 or 1927 as all the prices correspond. Interestingly the showcard (which I've never seen) also uses the same technique of using just the actual metal lids, which must make a very attractive and colourful showcard. It's certainly very successful in the showcase. It is interesting to note that on the 1931 showcard the Edison Bell "Electric" tin cost 1/3d and the Edison Bell "Bell shaped" tin cost 1/1d or 1/3d. Today the shaped Bell tins are much rarer and would certainly cost a lot more.

A wonderful, recent find for my own collection. Coming next, details of the Songster showcase. I have seen adverts of a Beltona, Columbia, Edison Bell (different) and HMV showcases but have not actually seen them. Can anyone help? Are there any others?

SEASON 1927

THE LATEST

EDISON BELL

NEEDLE SHOW CARD

THIS very attractive display card measures 13 inches deep by 9 inches wide. The base is red, over-printed with white lettering and THE ACTUAL METAL COVERS OF NEEDLE BOXES USED FOR PACKING OUR NEEDLES ARE INSERTED, consequently, the effect of this advertisement is considerably enhanced.



WE feel confident that the dealers who display this card prominently will attract considerable public attention to their establishment and reap a rich harvest of increased sales. As the supply is strictly limited, early application for same will avoid disappointment.

FREE TO ALL DEALERS

Upon application to their Factors or direct to
EDISON BELL LIMITED, LONDON, S.E.15, & HUNTINGDON.



Edison Bell

Chromic Needles, etc.

ELECTRIC CHROMIC GOLD PLATED.



The "ELECTRIC CHROMIC" was specially introduced for use with electric recordings, which, having greater vibrations, necessitate a different needle.

After extensive research and experiments with the same high-grade special steel that made our Chromic Needles famous, we have produced THE PERFECT ELECTRIC NEEDLE.

Each Needle plays up to 10 Records.

Price 1/3 per box of 100 Needles.

STANDARD CHROMIC GOLD PLATED

These superb needles are the outcome of many years' scientific research, and only after exhaustive tests were they placed upon the market.

1/- per box of 100 Needles.



RADIO NEEDLES

A specially prepared steel Needle accurately shaped and the very thing to use when playing RADIO Records.

6d. per box of 200 Needles.



Medium Full Tone.
per box of 200, 6d.



Spear Point.
per box of 200, 8d.



Soft Tone.
per box of 200, 6d.



Double Tone.
per box of 200, 8d.



Radio.
per box of 200, 6d.

WINNER NEEDLES



Another excellent Needle for all round purposes is the WINNER. 6d. per box of 200 Needles.

Edison Bell
CHROMIC NEEDLE EJECTOR.

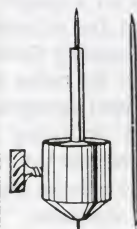
"Sympathetic" Chromic and Grip

No gramophone equipment is complete without an Edison Bell Sympathetic Needle Outfit. This device consists of a delicately tapered Double-pointed Needle and Grip-attachment. The Sympathetic Needle slides into the Grip (see illustrations).

To render the needle rigid, turn the thumb-screw, then insert Grip and Needle into the sound-box as an ordinary needle.

This device enables the user to obtain any desired volume from a whisper almost to the full sound of a loud sound.

Records played solely with Sympathetic Needles last three times as long.



Sympathetic Needle Grip showing needle inserted for full volume. The reproducing point is shown slightly protruding from the base.



Illustration shows Sympathetic fitted to play a very fine soft volume, almost a whisper.

EACH "SYMPATHETIC" CHROMIC NEEDLE WILL PLAY UP TO 40 RECORDS.

Sympathetic Chromic Needle Holder with 25 double-pointed gold plated Needles, 2/6

Box of 25 Sympathetic Chromic Needles only—(Refills) 1/-

Edison Bell
AUTOMATIC STOP
Will Fit any Gramophone.

Price - 2/6

Complete with screws and full instructions for Fitting and Operation.



This Bell-shaped container permits one needle to emerge at a time.

Complete with 100 Standard Chromic Needles 1/1
Complete with 100 Electric Chromic Needles 1/3

GEORGE VAN DUSEN 1905-1992

by Rick Hardy

Sadly, George Van Dusen, one of the last great Music Hall artists, passed away recently. I first heard of George Van Dusen from my father who often used to talk of how he was one of his favourite acts at the old Collins Music Hall in Islington in London. Later on when I started collecting Music hall records I never passed up the opportunity of acquiring his work. At the time I was not aware as to whether he was alive or not but from a chance remark some years ago I found he was indeed very much alive and kicking and living in London.

George Van Dusen was born Thomas Harrington on April 10th 1905 in the East End of London. He made his stage debut in 1921 at the age of 16 at the London Music Hall in Shoreditch on a 'Free and Easy' night. he appeared as 'The Yodelling Dutchman' and won!

From this he went on to a professional career on the 'boards'. He first appeared under the name of *Fred Farrell* but was persuaded early on to change it to George Van Dusen to fit better with the title 'The Great Dutch Yodeller' which he used throughout his career.

He was a prolific recording artist in the late 1920s and 1930s - his final record was issued in 1941.

Under the names *Fred Farrell*, *George Van Dusen* and *Vanco* his singing, yodelling and harmonica playing can be heard on many record labels including Broadcast, Rex, Sterno, Decca, Crown, Eclipse and Parlophone. The list of people he worked with reads like a *Who's Who* of the world of Music Hall; ranging from Ella Shields to Gracie Fields and Harry Champion to Max Miller.



George Van Dusen aged 24 or 25

I first met George at his neat semi-detached house in a quiet street in Edmonton around 1983. He was a man of small stature but of a warm and friendly nature. Naturally he liked to talk of the old Music Hall days but never in a boastful fashion. I remember once telephoning him to check on a record of him that I had just obtained. It was *The Yodelling Romeo*

on Parlophone - issued under his name but with a singing voice that I didn't recognise, although the yodelling was obviously by him. He pointed that the singer was Maurice Elwin and when I asked as to why he didn't do the vocals himself he answered "Oh Maurice Elwin had a better voice than me". I then asked him why it was issued under his name, to which he replied "I sold more records!" Indeed he did!

For a time during the 1930s he was undoubtedly one of the biggest selling artistes for the Crystalate Company with only the likes of Gracie Fields and Sandy

Powell above him. As with these other artistes his records turn up in abundance in dealers piles in all parts of the country; this is proof of vast sales and he would surely have retired a very wealthy man had he been paid royalties on the scale of today's pop singers.

In 1988 he had a richly deserved return to stardom. By chance Derek Jameson the BBC disc jockey played his 1937 recording of *It's Party Time Again* on his radio programme and from that George Van Dusen was rediscovered! Television and radio interviews followed with among others Terry Wogan, Gloria Hunniford and Tony Blackburn, culminating with the issue of two 45rpm singles and an LP of his old 78s. One of the singles was a modern remix with a disco type rhythm added which tickled George pink! He thoroughly enjoyed his second bout of fame and quite honestly it couldn't have happened to a nicer person.

When *It's Party Time Again* entered the pop record charts in 1989 George created two new entries in the *Guinness Book of Records*. Firstly he became the oldest person to enter the charts and secondly the record replaced Bing Crosby's *White Christmas* as the oldest record to make the hit parade!

George Van Dusen died at the North Middlesex Hospital, London on the 11th December 1992 after a short illness and was cremated at the Enfield Crematorium. Representatives of Bri-Tone Records which re-issued his work joined his family at the service. He is survived by his widow Ruby, daughter Joanie and his son Brian.



George Van Dusen in 1988, aged 83, with Terry Wogan at the BBC

VIOLET ESSEX

by Peter Cliffe

The dramatic author Walter MacQueen-Pope once wrote of Lilian Davies that she was 'a lovely woman with a lovely voice'. He could have said the same with equal truth of Violet Essex, a dark-haired, slender girl whose soprano had a limpid purity. But whereas the Welsh actress-soprano died (at 57) when her stage career had finally blossomed after a long struggle, Violet Essex never realised her full potential, eventually fading into obscurity.

Violet Louise Essex was born in London on October 19 1893, the daughter of John Essex, at one time Mayor of Islington, who died in 1921. In an article published in *Music Masterpieces* on July 29 1926 she recalled her nervousness when required to sing at a mayoral banquet.

Not long afterwards she appeared for the first time at one of the then very popular National Sunday League concerts, held in the evening in a West End theatre. She probably sang a ballad. She obviously continued to appear at such functions for, introducing her in the Supplement of May 1915, HMV remarked: "She is well-known for her work at the West End theatres and is an experienced star at Sunday League concerts."

Hoping for a career in opera, Violet Essex studied in London and Milan, but although her voice was true and strong, it probably lacked the power essential for operatic stardom. She is unlikely too to have possessed the ruthlessness which characterised the diva; indeed, her close friend, Bessie Jones, once commented on the sweetness of her disposition. It took a Melba to claw her way upward to operatic heights.

Violet Essex began to undertake some stage work, and this led to a three-year contract with Sir Alfred Butt. While appearing at the Palace Theatre, she was auditioned by George Edwardes, who gave her a part in *The Sunshine Girl*, with music by Paul Rubens, which opened at the Gaiety Theatre in February 1912, Phyllis Dare being the leading lady.

Operatic hopes must have been revived temporarily when she subsequently received a good part in a Covent Garden production of *Carmen*, but the engagement seems to have been a one-off for this aspiring young singer.

Instead, her next significant part seems to have been *Marjanah*, a slave girl, in Oscar Asche's remarkable hit *Chu Chin Chow* (music by Frederic Norton) which began at His Majesty's Theatre on August 31 1916 and ran for a staggering 2238 performances.

Violet Essex recorded three items from *Chu Chin Chow* for HMV: *Any Times's Kissing Time*, a duet with the tenor Courtice Pounds (04186), for which she was required to speak as well as sing, *Cleopatra's Nile* (2-3208) and *I Love You So* (03528).

Sadly, she seemed destined for minor roles in other successful productions or major ones in unsuccessful ones, such as *Violette*, with music by John Ansell, which opened at the Lyric Theatre in May 1918 and came off after about eight weeks.

It has to be said, however, that her 1926 article contradicts this statement, claiming that she had leading parts in many plays, and that she also appeared at the principal variety theatres. Unfortunately, she gave no details and the normally informative *Who's Who in the Theatre* never had an entry for Violet Essex, nor did it record her passing.



Yours truly
Violet Essex

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MISS VIOLET ESSEX.

LAMBERT WESTON,
28 BROMPTON SQ., S.W.



In July 1918 she married Charles Tucker, a Jewish violinist-entertainer from Hartford, Connecticut, who (as Tucker) had been appearing in British variety theatres since pre-World War One days. They had a son and two daughters.

It is tantalising to know so little about her apparently busy stage and variety career, but it was probably over long before the summer of 1940, when the entire family emigrated to California. She must have been a sick woman already and she was very ill indeed when admitted to the Cedars of Lebanon Hospital, Los Angeles, where she died, aged 47, on January 31 1941, her husband surviving until 1979.

Violet Essex appeared on various labels over the years, including Beka, Columbia (re-issued on Regal), HMV (sometimes as 'Vera Desmond'), John Bull, Popular and Velvet Face. It would greatly appreciated if readers possessing records (other than Columbia/Regal) would pass on details of songs recorded, catalogue numbers, matrices and takes. This would facilitate dating and go some way towards the compilation of a discography.

Forthcoming Meetings in London

London Meetings are held at the National Sound Archive, 29 Exhibition Road, South Kensington, on the **third Thursday evening of the month** promptly at **6.45pm** (unless stated otherwise). Members' attention is drawn to the London Meetings Notice on page 100 of issue 188 (October 1992).

June 17th	<i>Everything you always wanted to know about the National Sound Archive (but were afraid to ask).</i> A tape/slide presentation by Benet Bergonzi. Curator of Artefacts
July 15th	Timothy Massey in <i>Victorian Pot Boilers</i> . Timothy chooses some choice recordings from his record collection of artists singing Victorian ballads
August 19th	George Woolford in <i>1904 and Melba</i> . George introduces some of the records issued by The Gramophone & Typewriter Ltd. in 1904
September 16th	<i>We Have Our Own Records, Part 2</i> - Frank Andrews presents a further glimpse into the world of unusual labels
October 21st	John Cowley will be talking about and identifying the role of migrant musicians in the evolution of the recording industry in the U.K.
November 18th	To be announced
December 16th	<i>Members Night</i> - Bring your own favourites to share with others
January 20th 1994	<i>Follow the Dog</i> - Ruth Edge, Archivist with EMI Music Ltd. at Hayes, reveals some of the treasures she is responsible for
February 18th	Ruth Lambert. Title to be announced
March 18th	Chris Hamilton. Title to be announced

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MY LIFE WITH THE GRAMOPHONE

by L. Miles Mallinson

My earliest recollection of the Gramophone is having to sit quietly as my father played his records of string quartets and other classical works, on his Model 522 H.M.V. radiogram, when I would be perhaps two or three years of age. I did not like these winter afternoons, as not only was the music not to my taste at so young an age. I sat there not allowed to make so much as a squeak when all I wanted to do was draw and play with my identical twin brother!

The "Gramophone" was out of bounds to us children and although there was a set of nursery records, we could not hear them unless Father was there. I suppose that I was about six years old when the thought of making something to play records on came to mind and I made a Meccano Gramophone, which was hand cranked through a bevel gear drive. It was my own design, a totally disgusting noise and rapidly destroyed those nursery records, (which were the only ones I could get to fit on the machine), but it did work and I was now able to play it without permission. It was mine!

Shortly after this time I received a Columbia Grafonola table model complete with a great pile of records, all for sixpence from a sale. I was in heaven at last. My brother and I shared an attic room a play, work and bedroom and on one very hot evening we discovered one of our favourite records lying on the window sill in the sun. It was hanging over the edge with almost half of it at rightangles to the rest. It was picked up and placed under a pile of records to flatten it, but in our enthusiasm to see if it still worked, we placed it on a gramophone,

played it and as it did work we said so to each other. Some time later the record was again played and there heard in the background were two little voices rejoicing over our success in straightening it. Old and unwanted records with plenty of run out grooves were heated up in front of the electric fire until our fingers couldn't hold them, before placing them on the turntable and bawling down the horn whilst the records were played. None of them worked as well as that first one, but at least we had found out how to record.

The diecast tone arm of the Grafonola did not last very long in our young hands and the time came to replace it with an electric pickup, which Dad gave us, along with Grandma's old wireless set to act as an amplifier. The sound was not brilliant and after getting some more old wirelesses from a friend whose father was in the trade, I set out attempting to improve the sound. A Philips set gave me the speaker, with a permanent magnet, which was much better than the awful mains-energised one that had been fitted. A second similar speaker was duly dismantled, 'to see what made it tick'. Having removed the frame and cone, the magnet and coil assembly was fitted with a cantilever and pivot, containing a needle holder in the bottom. The top of it was connected to the voice-coil former and centraliser unit and on connecting this up to the speaker leads of the wireless set, I now had an 'electric cutter' for making records. With much more power than the old Grafonola 'recording system', I once again tried warming up old records. It worked but was not much use in that form, but finding a roll

of celluloid, (used by my father for making side screens on his touring cars), I cut it into circles of about eight inches in diameter, warmed and flattened it as before and this gave me a much better recording medium.

The motor of the poor old Graftonola was not powerful enough for this work and I scrounged a War Department "field gramophone" which had two huge clockwork motors, fitted back to back. One ran at 78 r.p.m. and the other at a speed I had never heard of: 33 r.p.m. It had an electric pick-up and was used with a battery amplifier. Even this great monster didn't have enough power at 78 r.p.m. but at 33 r.p.m. it was satisfactory and provided that the records were played back on this machine it was enough. At first the record cutter was hand held over the rotating record and moved across the surface towards the centre; but later I fitted it with a 2BA leadscrew which I cut with a hand die and guided the cutter on two rods passing over the record. The leadscrew was driven from a pulley on the centre spindle of the machine onto a larger one on the leadscrew by means of spring belting. I made many records with this makeshift recorder; but sadly they and the machine have long since been lost.

My next move was to make a radiogram (I was about ten at this time) and a gentleman in the village, who was an expert in electronics, drew a circuit diagram and gave me the bits to build my amplifier (it used American Octal valves). The next evening I was back to his house to test it and as it worked well he persuaded me to make a superheterodyne tuner to go with it (for which he also gave me the components). This too was returned within a day or two for testing and aligning. I wonder how many people today would put up with some little horror from up the road night after night and give away those valuable bits and pieces. What a friend, Eh!

The tuner and amplifier finally had a cabinet made for them as my woodwork project when I started at grammar school. I had saved up for two years to buy one of the latest B.S.R. Monarch record decks with the new speed of $33\frac{1}{3}$ r.p.m. for the new LPs. Over the years this system was improved, by making better amplifiers, tuners, turntables etc. and finally stereo and Hafler surround sound, all of my own manufacture.

In 1982 I was as up to date as it was possible to be in sound reproduction, but all the vintage equipment which I had left at my childhood home had gone for good. I saw some 78s in a shop window and bought them and at that time had not even got a machine to play them on; but it was a start.

My self-made equipment up to this stage was an economy method to bring me the best within my means. In 1983, although I had been looking for an old phonograph for some time, I had not made any real contacts and knew of no-one who had such a thing (except a friend who owned an Amberola, which I had repaired 22 years earlier). Having made a little music box which operates on punched paper tape, I had shown it to a friend, who said to me "I have a thing like that at home but it is broken. If you want it I will bring it in for you." He did and it turned out to be a Model 1 Gem which needed a bottom pulley, stylus arm, reproducer weight and belt, all of which I set about making. Since that time I have collected Gems in all sorts of conditions, including one which had been found at the bottom of an iron mine. It had no motor, carrier arm, leadscrew, mandrel, base etc., giving me lots of enjoyment and a challenge to remake missing parts and renovate those few bits that were there.

I now own about 47 machines, many of which have components from my 'stable', having added to them reproducers, sound-boxes, arms, elbows, back-brackets, horns (including a Cygnet), gears, governors,

cases etc. I have totally made up two Pucks and a half sized Dog Model and much of an Edison Bell Gem (*Hillandale News* June 1990), Edison Spring motor (*Hillandale News*, December 1989), an EMG Mark X (*Hillandale News*, April 1993) and I have recently finished an Edison Triumph with a new style case and 2 and 4 minute gearing, which was on show at the Northampton Phonofair of April 1993.

My only machine tool at home is an old Raglan Lathe which I had to renovate and on which most of the work which I have done on my machines has been carried out. This includes cutting 50 and 100 t.p.i. leadscrews, cutting small gears and worm-wheels and even grinding hardened worms for governor spindles.

I enjoy making these parts as much as playing the equipment and I get just as much pleasure in winding up the latest project for the first time as I did when I had just completed the first one. This little account of my rather unusual hobby is not set out here as a "Hey! Look what I've done!", but simply to document a series of

projects I have completed, in connection with the gramophone, over many years, which have brought pleasure to me and to those who have seen them. To me this work is just an interesting pastime with a positive result.

Postscript

About four years ago I was helping to organise a car boot sale for a local choir when I found some old records on one of the stalls. I could not resist looking through them. There was nothing but unsleeved 78s and 45s. Then I spotted something of interest to me. There was one of my old hand made records which I had made in celluloid all those years before. I bought it, took it home and tried it. It was then that I remembered that they were recorded at $33\frac{1}{3}$ r.p.m., because at that speed the motor didn't slow down when the cut was made. The noise level was terrible and the content was bits and pieces but there after all those years was, unmistakably, *Those were the days* recorded through Grandma's wireless set.



The front of a well-known record shop seen in Bath last year

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Contact - Wal Fowler, Tel: [REDACTED] or Geoff Howl, Tel: [REDACTED]

C.L.P.G.S. BOOKLIST

Item B 50 *HMV 1930 Instrument and Accessories Catalogue* has been reprinted and is now available price **£6** incl. U.K. postage.

Item B 210 *Hayes on Record* - The story of the manufacture of records & tapes at E.M.I.'s Hayes Factory edited by Peter Hall and Colin Brown. Paperback with over 200 pages and many illustrations is now available price **£7** incl. U.K. postage.

Item B 211 *World Records, Vocalion W, Fetherflex and Penny Phono Recordings* A Listing by Frank Andrews, Arthur Badrock and Edward S. Walker is now available price **£4** incl. U.K. postage.

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A POLITICAL VIEW IN 1930

by George Frow

In spite of what is going on around us in Westminster and elsewhere, politics on records have had a place almost from the time recording started, and several excellent papers about them have appeared in this and other journals. Such records have become sought after by British and American collectors and appear in the auction lists that circulate, and presumably non-English countries can offer their own brands of political recordings with collectors in pursuit.

A Columbia record DB 177 came into the writer's collection in 1937, bought for the *Stein Song* side played by the National Military Band (WA 10535). It was in new condition and cost just a few coppers, and on the reverse *The Empire Parade* (dedicated to the Empire Party) was also played by the same band and conducted by its composer Billy Mayerl (WA 10534). The words were written by Frank Eyton, and although both sides are brightly recorded the men's group singing the chorus could be more distinct.

What of the Empire Party? This was born of a policy launched in May 1929 by Lord Beaverbrook (1879-1964), and owner of the Daily Express. The Empire Free Trade Crusade was founded on 24th October 1929, its chief aim being to unseat Stanley Baldwin, then heading a National Government. Beaverbrook was joined by others including Harold Macmillan and Robert Boothby. The United Empire Party was officially formed on February 18th 1930 and its red crusader emblem appeared from then on the front page of The Daily Express, and it was hoped that someone like Churchill or the Earl of Birkenhead (F. E. Smith) might head the movement; Winston however was a free-trader - he would trade anywhere. The Empire Crusade

contested six by-elections in 1930 and threatened to split the Conservative vote, but its first successful candidate was Vice-Admiral A. E. Taylor who won South Paddington by 941 votes. Interest in more extreme parties of both leanings began to take over through the thirties and the Empire Party faded, but support in some quarters for an Imperial Policy and Imperial Preference was heard into the fifties.

Columbia DB 177 was reviewed in August 1940 in *The Gramophone* and W. A. Chislett received the *The Empire Parade* side with no great enthusiasm - "in spite of its press publicity, the latter is but a poor tune".

A more historically noteworthy record of the same music plus a more patriotic content was also noted by W. A. C. in the same review. This was called: *The Empire Parade with Message from the United Empire Party, Empire Military Band and Vocal Chorus* - surely a contender somewhere for a longest title. Chislett described this 8-inch Edison Bell Radio Record 1362 as 'high-falutin', but the years have certainly changed a lightly-considered view. On both sides it seems to have Canadian-born Lord Beaverbrook appealing for support for Empire trade and tariffs against foreign dumping, as well as a good band, and a robust unnamed baritone and chorus. The band may have been the Scots Guards and the singer Stanley Kirkby, both favourites at Edison Bell at that time.

Times, attitudes and aspirations have altered and both these records are 60 years over their shelf life. Interestingly, had Beaverbrook been alive and active today, how vigorously he would have opposed the Common Market.

REVIEWS



GIACOMO

LAURI-VOLPI:

The Complete Studio Recordings

The complete studio recordings - well, not quite; the post-war complete operas are not included, but Lauri-Volpi's two LPs of songs and arias are. Lauri-Volpi (born 1892) had the misfortune to be younger than his great rival, Gigli (born 1890). Both tenors studied with Cotogni and Rosati. Being slightly older, Gigli made his debut before the war in 1914, and by the end of that war, was established on the international operatic stage. Lauri-Volpi served in the army and did not make his debut until 1919. When Caruso died in 1921, Gigli was hailed as 'Il Tenore', his legitimate successor; and Lauri-Volpi was always thereafter somewhat in the shadow of his celebrated countryman, except in Italy, where his true merit was appreciated, and also, in the late 1920s, at the Met in New York, where he demanded and got a higher salary than Gigli - ten cents more, in fact.

Unfortunately for non-Italians, the major record companies showed much more interest in Gigli than in Lauri-Volpi. For example, in the UK HMV dealers' catalogue for 1935 (at the height of both Gigli's and Lauri-Volpi's recording careers), I count sixty Gigli sides and only four with Lauri-Volpi - and he shares those with Elisabeth Rethberg and de Luca (a few others had been deleted by then).

Well, a wider audience can now enjoy Lauri-Volpi's art with the appearance of these splendid CDs. They chart the rise and fall of a great singer. He made his first

records in 1920 and his last in 1973, just before his 81st birthday - 53 years, a bigger span than even Peter Dawson's recording career; and yet, not including the two LPs (19 items), only about 85 sides.

His 1920 efforts were for a Fonotipia subsidiary in Argentina. They are pretty awful, not so much because of the recording quality but because of the singer's style - or rather, lack of individual style. His hero seems to be de Lucia, and his records are almost parodies of de Lucia's, with fluttery tone and extended diminuendos to a pianissimo. Then in 1922 follows an Italian series for Fonotipia. The mature Lauri-Volpi is more in evidence - full, open throated singing, a ringing tone, a rather declamatory style, still some intonation problems, but rewarding records. The 1923 Brunswicks, recorded in the U.S.A., show a further advance.

But the great Lauri-Volpi records start with the electric Victors of the late 1920s. There are about a dozen of these, and many are classic performances. The full open throated sound is still there, but with the addition of an even finer legato line and a sensitive range. The excellence continues with his mid-30s Italian HMV records. By the 1940s, the smoothness of emission, steadiness of tone and ease in his high notes are in decline, but the sheer love of singing is still evident. Finally in 1973, the nuances have largely gone, but one's heart warms to a man, who at 80, can still make such a glorious sound.

The transfers are well done on the whole, with good sound and little surface noise. The 1923 Brunswicks benefit from a boost to the bass and the occasional brightness can easily be rectified. Each disc is accompanied by a booklet with notes in Italian only. However, booklets 3 and 4 are just albums of photographs. Booklet 1 outlines Lauri-Volpi's career and booklet 2 outlines his recording career, with some critical

appreciation of the recordings. Booklet 5 gives more details of the records, for which I wish my Italian was more fluent! This booklet also contains photographs of all the 78rpm record labels, including Victor and Fonorama tests, of records on which the singer is heard. Matrix numbers and recording dates are given; I don't know how accurate this information is, but the one matrix I was able to check gave a different published take number to that in the recent de Luca discography. There is a band error on disc three; an Aida sequence recorded in four parts, three in 1929 and the fourth in 1930, is supposed to appear as two bands. In fact it plays as one and as a result all subsequent tracks on the disc are misnumbered.

One nice touch; each disc reproduces a label from the original 78 or LP represented: 1, Fonotipia; 2, Brunswick; 3, Victrola; 4, Disco 'Gramofono' and 5, Cetra. Total playing time is about 5¾ hours.

From the sound of these CDs, Lauri-Volpi, as John Steane remarked, was certainly worth all that and ten cents too.

G. W. Taylor

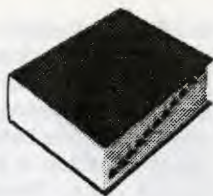
{These discs, TIMAClub CLAMADisCo CD 15/1-5, are available from TIMAClub - CP83 - 00060 Castelnuovo di Porto (RM) - ITALY. See the small advert in this issue for full details. Ed.}

NIPPER BITES AGAIN

When the CDs mentioned in my last piece were issued I wondered if it would be something that would disappear as surprisingly as it came...but no...February has seen two more bearing the full HMV picture. 780132-2 has 74 minutes of George Melachrino's Orchestra from 1946 to 1958. 780133-2 has 76 minutes of Charles Williams and his Orchestra from 1946 to 1954. This latter includes *Puffin Billy* composed by Edward White and *Reveille for a Toy Soldier* by Ivor Slaney, recorded in the 1950s but not previously issued. Here are two fine CDs of light orchestral music properly played under the batons of 'masters' (no slurping strings etc. that crept into other orchestras). They fill that void between symphony and 'pop' in which few perform these days. Both very highly recommended, each seems to have another catalogue number intended for the UK - CDHMV 5 and CDHMV 6 respectively.

Ernie Bayly

REVIEWS



JOHN McCORMACK and ATHLONE

This 36-page book by Gearoid O'Brien published by The Old Athlone Society was sent to me by Padraic O'Hara and is recently published. It includes photographs of old Athlone, some lent by the family of the late Robert L. Webster, a great authority on McCormack, extracts from *The Westmeath Independent* and notes compiled by the late Brendan O'Brien. The book examines such myths as 'Athlone did little for John McCormack and vice versa' (an old chestnut!) showing that there was a great musical life in old Athlone and that McCormack was part of it when quite young. His school days and early career are covered and we read of two of his benefactors John Walsh and Michael Kilkelly and of John McCormack himself as a benefactor to Athlone. When his career advanced, he naturally had little time for visiting his home town, especially after the death of his parents. There is a charming photograph of one such visit showing little Cyril and his grandparents. John's final performance in Athlone took the form of a solemn Gregorian Mass in St. Mary's Church, the price of tickets being donated to charity.

My own recollection of John McCormack is of hearing him singing at several 'Workers' Playtime' BBC broadcasts during World War II, which originated from various factory canteens - often under difficult conditions. One assumes that these concerts were performed free or for expenses only, by all artists involved.

This very interesting little booklet is available from **The Old Athlone Society**, 52, Roslevin Lawn, Ballymahon Road, Athlone, Ireland. I have no note of the price.

Ernie Bayly

A Catalogue of World Records

On 18th August 1909 W. R. Dennison of the Victor and Gramophone Companies was granted British Patent 17,345 for a variable speed gramophone, which, by use of a hollow cone underneath made the turntable revolve more quickly as the tone arm moved toward the centre of the record. At least one 'table model' was made and survived for many years at the Hayes factory where it was seen by this writer. Although everyone desired better sounds from records, particularly towards the centre where the decreasing speed of the groove caused a deterioration of quality, Mr Dennison's invention could be commercially successful only if all the companies adopted the same system. Perhaps it could have been adapted to switch from 'special' to 'ordinary' use, but having proved the possibility to play a record which had constant linear speed under the point of the needle, the invention was not developed into production.

In July 1922 Noel Pemberton-Billing was granted British patents 195,673 and 204,728 "for a device for obtaining uniform linear speed of the soundtrack of a disc record". Then in November 1922 he received patent 210,835 for the apparatus upon which those discs were recorded.

Using a Pemberton-Billing 'controller' that could be fitted to any gramophone one could play 'ordinary' records that revolved at 78rpm or his special World Records (of constant linear speed) but which were made to vary from about 30 to 80 rpm. Military and dance music averaged 9 minutes per 12-inch side and instrumental 11 minutes.

A catalogue of *World Records* has been published recently, having been compiled by Frank Andrews, Arthur Badrock and Edward S. Walker, complete with a chronology of Noel Pemberton-Billing's achievements in other fields as well, which included

his being instrumental in the forming in 1916 of the Royal Flying Corps and the Air Council.

The catalogue is arranged in repertoire categories. The dance section has 62 records (each containing six selections), many of which had come from *Emerson Records* of U.S.A. and included tunes played by such as Fletcher Henderson's Orchestra, Nathan Glantz and His Orchestra and the Emerson Dance Orchestra. There were 56 Military Band records that included the Central Band of the Royal Air Force, the Band of the United Guards and the Cromwell Brass Band - named after N. P-B's residence and works. The number of selections per side varied in this category because it became possible to play longer compositions. The vocal repertoire was performed by well-known recording singers who included Robert Carr, Carrie Herwin and John Thorne. Their selection of operatic arias and songs included the familiar and lesser-known. It is interesting that the longer duration allowed whole song-cycles upon one disc such as *Bow Bells* (Willerby), *Salt Water Ballads* (Frederick Keel) and *Four Indian Love Lyrics* (A. Woodforde-Finden). There were eight Instruction and Educational records among which were discs of songs for children (NOT nursery rhymes), instructions for the "new" ballroom dances that were then coming in (e.g. foxtrot and slow foxtrot). As in other categories, the Instrumental discs could encompass longer works such as *Tod und das Mädchen* (Schubert), and *Quartet in G minor* (Debussy - an early recording of this work). These works each appeared on three sides. There were nine Scottish records of songs and pipers. An excellent index facilitates reference to all selections issuedwith composers' names!!

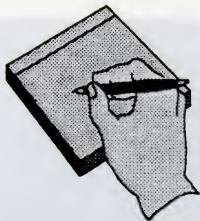
In 1925 the Vocalion Gramophone Co. Ltd. purchased the rights in the English *World Records*, from which were issued *Vocalion Long Playing Records* of which there were only twenty one before production ceased. These are listed in the catalogue, all being 12-inch discs. Pemberton-Billing was also involved in the unsuccessful *Featherflex Records* of which twenty are listed. There were also *Penny Phono Recordings* of 12-inch diameter from Cinematone Studios produced in constant linear speed.

Perhaps the need for a two-spring gramophone to play the constant linear speed discs of longer duration contributed to the commercial failure. Noel Pemberton-Billing was unable to revolutionise the recording processes because the industry was so well entrenched. He was 'before his time' - a visionary seeing a solution to the maintenance of a standard of quality through the whole duration of a recording. This was not solved for a cheap commercial market until the advent of cassette-tape recordings. His situation cannot be compared to the introduction of Long Play records because by that time electrical reproduction itself was advancing along lines of quality and a slightly more affluent society was rejoicing in peace and could understand and hear obvious advantages in the long-play system.

This interesting, illustrated and excellently produced catalogue of World Records with chronology of Noel Pemberton-Billing is available priced £4 (including postage for the U.K.) from the **Society's Booklist**.

Ernie Bayly

LETTERS



Pathé Records

Dear Editor,

I read Gerry Stevenson's *Call for help on Pathé vertical cut records* (we say *Pathé-saphirs*) in the letters section of the February issue 1993 *Hillandale News*. As a French collector, may I give my advice? In 1971, the late B.I.R.S. published *Vertical cut cylinders and discs* by Victor Girard and Harold M. Barnes. The first part of the book remains, in my opinion, the 'Bible' for all of us who need to understand the basics of the Pathé Frères production from the beginning until the end of the twenties. Of course, twenty years after its publication, some details have come to light: the case of the pantograph for instance (p.xviii), some drawings have since been published; due to its shape, it was known in the factory as *le poisson* (the fish). It has been established, too, that recording on cylinders and pantographing on discs was the system in use in the factory, until 1928, well after the advent in France of the *Pathé Actuelle* needle cut discs, and the adoption of the first matrix series, etc. But, as I said, only such details need some completion; what is essential is in the book.

To end, let me quote Girard and Barnes (p.xxvi) "no list of Pathé recordings can be drawn up numerically according to conventional standards." Good luck Gerry!

Your sincerely,

Marc Monneraye, Saint Maur, France

P.S. Mr Harold Barnes is still living in Paris. If he reads *Hillandale News*, I wish to thank him and (V. Girard), for his unique contribution to the story of Pathé records.

{Victor Girard is still alive and well, living in the U.S.A. A friend of mine has recently been in correspondence with him. Ed.}

Date that British 78

Dear Sir,

I am endeavouring to compile a booklet with the title *Date That English 78* and am seeking the assistance of my fellow members and other readers of *Hillandale News* for information they may be able to send me with a view to my completing this project.

I realise that I have set myself a daunting task as I know of 150+ English labels and as many are long since defunct obtaining details of their releases, number series and years of issue is becoming more of a Goliath size undertaking as time goes by.

If any other of your readers can help in any way I would be grateful. Any paperwork that I can borrow I will guarantee its safety and happily refund any postage or costs involved in aiding my project, which I am undertaking in my own time.

For the benefit of readers it is only 78 rpm records that I am detailing and trying to produce a list giving label, prefix and record number, size and year of release. Any help with the minor obscure labels would be appreciated, but so would the majors like HMV and Columbia.

Thanking you for your help in this matter,

Your faithfully,

Eddie Shaw, London

{Does this proposed publication include the labels that were produced in Scotland, Wales and N. Ireland? If so I suggest that the title used to head this letter is more appropriate. Ed.}

Theodore Miller Edison

Dear Chris,

I enclose a picture of Theodore Edison and myself taken at the Edison National Historic Site, West Orange, near New York City in 1978. We are standing by one of his father's phonographs (an Amberola 1).

After the quality of my electrical transcriptions of Edison cylinders was heard at an international exhibition in Europe I was invited to the Edison factory, now a museum, in the U.S.A. to transcribe hundreds of cylinders in the archive there.



Theodore Edison and Joe Pengelly

While working there Theodore Edison looked in and consented to be photographed with me but only on condition that the picture should not be published until after his death - a condition I have always honoured. Unlike his father Theodore was publicity-shy.

As a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Theodore was an inventor in his own right though subject to the 'son of a great man syndrome'. Since his father had invented sound recording, the electric light, the early long playing record and in 1913 a form of sound film this is not surprising. His father with his great friend Henry Ford had nineteenth-century ideas as to how to treat their employees, after his father's death Theodore sought to improve both the lot of these employees and the Company's pensioners.

Sorry the picture isn't better but I was not allowed the negative so it is a picture of a picture.

With all good wishes,

Joe Pengelly, Mannamead, Plymouth.

"Dictogramme"

Dear Sir,

The National Sound Archive suggested your journal might be able to help me. I have a 'dictogramme', a magnetic sheet with two hooks which were inserted in a drum. The machine was manufactured by Charleroi Electronique, a Belgian or French Company. On this sheet is something of great sentimental value to me: three songs sung by my immigrant grandmother and recorded in 1954 on my father's office dictating machine. The National Sound Archive are not optimistic about finding a machine or even cooking up something from bits and pieces of other machines. They gave me your name and that of another magazine. Is it possible that any of your readers has a machine that would play a 'dictogramme'?

Thank you for your attention.

Yours faithfully,

Anthony Rudolf, London N12

"His Master's Voice" pick-up

Dear Sir,

I enclose a photograph of an H.M.V. No.2 Pick-up attached to a post-war Brunswick portable.

Around 1937 my grandmother bought this pick-up to use on her large HMV cabinet gramophone, similar to a 202 but without doors, not, I suspect, to increase volume, but to reduce the sound from the huge internal horn. Fitting it involved drilling a hole through the wall of the beautiful polished cabinet and fixing the volume-control to the outside with woodscrews, pure vandalism!

As all the weight was on the needle, her records were soon spoiled and, many years later, when the fret was damaged by a knee and removed for repair a cushion rendered this pick-up redundant. Standard needles are used held by a thumb-screw in an armature surrounded by a coil and positioned between the poles of a horse-shoe magnet. The output was fed via the volume-control into the amplification stage of a wireless set, many of which were provided with sockets at the rear for wander plugs and marked "P.U.".

The No.2 pick-up weighs 6½ ozs. to which the magnet contributes 3ozs. The wording on the front is: "His Master's Voice" No.2 The Gramophone Co. Ltd. Hayes Middx. England. Underneath are the words: Regd. Gt.Britain No. 764445. Made to fit in place of a 20mm. neck soundbox, a reducing ring was provided for 18mm.

Alas, grandmother's gramophone has long since gone but her No.2 remains together with a tin of worn needles and a few well worn 78s.

Thank you for a consistently interesting journal.

Yours faithfully,

David J. Riches, Feltham, Middlesex

Derek Barsham

Dear Sir,

A snippet of information for your correspondent W. R. Violen enquiring about Derek Barsham (last issue) is that on my recording of him singing *Hear my prayer* with the High Wycombe Orpheus Male Voice Choir (conductor W. Bromage and organist John B. Harris) on Decca K1111, he is listed as 'The Boys Brigade Boy Soprano'

Yours faithfully,

John Yates, Rainham, Kent

De Luca Discography

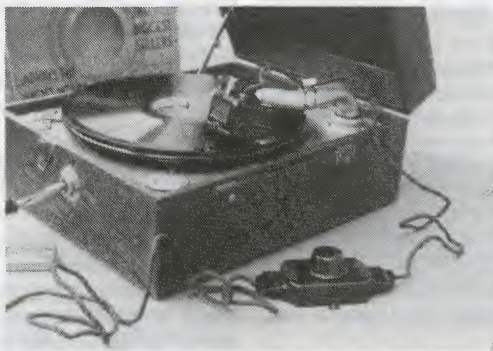
Sir,

It was gratifying that your reviewer found so much pleasure in our recently published discography of Giuseppe de Luca. To allay his fears "About the long term longevity of the binding" your reviewer may like to know that this was

chosen after very severe testing by a person familiar with testing methods applicable to packing materials for military equipment.

Yours faithfully,

Eliot B. Levin, Symposium Records



Marian Anderson

Dear Chris,

I'm sure you heard of the death of Marian Anderson on 8th April 1993, who was one of the last artists to have recorded acoustically. Quentin Riggs tells me that William Robyn, who began recording around 1918, is still alive aged 98. Are there any others?

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Bartlett, Hampshire

REPORTS

London Meeting, February 18th 1993

Members who missed Jonathan Dobson's broadcast *New Wood from Old Timber* on Radio 3 in December 1992 were left unaware of the excellent voice his first wife possessed.

Jonathan related his story of how, during the course of his studies at the Royal Academy of Music, his grant had prematurely run out. The Academy philanthropically offered to employ him part time. He was assigned to the Academy's library and innocently asked the librarian if they had any records to file. She replied that they had and handed Jonathan a key to a cupboard in the basement.

Those of us who have made 'finds' can appreciate the excitement Jonathan experienced when he re-discovered the private record collection of Sir Henry Wood which had been donated to the Academy several years previously. Despite the probability that most of the Columbia recordings had been disposed of to make room for other material, all the Decca recordings (many with alternative takes) and most of the Gramophone Company recordings that he had made with his first wife, the Russian singer Olga Urussov, were there

Mrs Henry Wood recorded 6 titles in 1908 and 1909 which the Gramophone Company Ltd. issued. They were not in the catalogue long and were withdrawn at her husband's request in December 1909, after her death. This meant that the five titles issued in June 1909 had a very short catalogue life and are exceedingly rare. Often, to be married to a famous partner gives an artist an importance disproportionate to their true ability. However listening to the records from these sessions shows that Olga, who had been a pupil of Sir Henry Wood, was a singer of merit.



Of the six issued sides, five were made while she was under contract to The Gramophone Company Ltd. These six were the only published examples of Sir Henry as an accompanist on the piano. In addition to these issued recordings Jonathan found eleven recordings from these 1908 and 1909 sessions that had not been issued commercially. They turned out to be test pressings, copies of which even E.M.I. Music Ltd.'s archive did not have.

Jonathan played many of these records for us. Mendelssohn's *On Wings of Song* was recorded both in English and in German (the earlier recording being in German). The audience preferred the earlier July 1908 recording. From this same session we also heard the aria from Tchaikovsky's *Joan of Arc*. This together, with *L'Enfant Prodigue* by Debussy, was probably in her repertoire at the time. However by the second session on 4th February 1909 she was under contract to The Gramophone Company Ltd., who probably 'advised' her about the repertoire she should record.

Strange mixtures occurred in her recordings like the unpublished 12" disc of Somervell's *Sleep Baby Sleep* coupled with Mendelssohn's *Praise Thou The Lord* on the same side. Two of Eric Coates's four songs set to Shakespearean themes followed. These were *Who is Sylvia?* and *There was a Lover and his Lass*. Olga had premiered these at the Promenade Concerts in 1909.

After the audience had been allowed to inspect and take mental notes of the test pressings they were treated to the extraordinary sound of Sir Henry Wood accompanying himself in Schumann's *The Lotus Flower* and Hatton's *To Anthea*. This confirmed that he could teach, he could conduct but he could not sing. No wonder the record was never issued commercially!

The Society is indebted to Jonathan Dobson for sharing with us these records he re-discovered, and we look forward to listening to his next project, *The Pupils of Liszt*, which he is preparing for the BBC and should be broadcast some time in the future.

G.W.

London Meeting, March 18th 1993

If the study of history of the past hundred years could be made through recordings, Chris Hamilton in the fourth of his series on *The Gramophone Record as an Historic Document* would be a profitable and enjoyable master to follow. Several times he has entertained us with recordings from private and Security sources as well as items that appeared in the catalogues, often briefly, fifty years ago. The period 1936 to 1953 naturally took in many references to the last war and reflected the national spirit of the times as well as the characters.

Cyril Fletcher recited 'odd odes' for Air Ministry Security, the Canadian Dorothy Thompson spoke on the radio in a 9 o'clock-ish slot on Sunday evenings, and from the Decca World War 2 series the voice of Paderewski, and Chamberlain and Hitler from a rare set of Army Bureau of Current Affairs (ABCA) records were heard.

Both King George VI and Princess (later Queen) Elizabeth were heard, with excerpts from the 1953 Coronation and the Duke of Edinburgh introducing Frank Sinatra. General MacArthur addressed Congress in 1951 on 6 closely-grooved 78 sides, and these play for well over 30 minutes in full.

So often the unexpected won their place, those mostly from private or limited pressings; we heard the 1948 Grand Prix motor race from Silverstone in all of 3 minutes, *Campbell's Pork and Bean Review of 1950* with the Andrews Sisters extolling baked beans; Jimmy Logan tried to recommend the advantages of chest X-rays to Glasgow, and with a prosaic introduction to the 1936 meeting of the Incorporated Electrical Association in Scotland, we wondered why they bothered. How correct and well-inflected were the BBC announcers of those times, Snagge, Phillips and Hibberd, and such are much missed.

Chris Hamilton comes from a long way north of the Border, but he brings the gift of holding an audience's close attention for nearly two hours of sound and slides. There was much to enjoy and learn and hopefully there is more in the cupboard.

A London Correspondent

Midlands Group Meeting, 27th March 1993 at Carrs Lane Methodist Church

We had a rather smaller attendance than usual. This was probably caused partly by the change of date which had been forced upon us at short notice. This was our first meeting under the new arrangements whereby all the formal business concerning the Group and its activities are now being dealt with at separate committee meetings, leaving our Saturday evening meetings purely for entertainment, discussion and trading.

Phil Bennett, our Secretary, has produced a newsletter for members' information. The first edition of this was distributed at the meeting. This newsletter itemises meetings, record fairs and other relevant events.

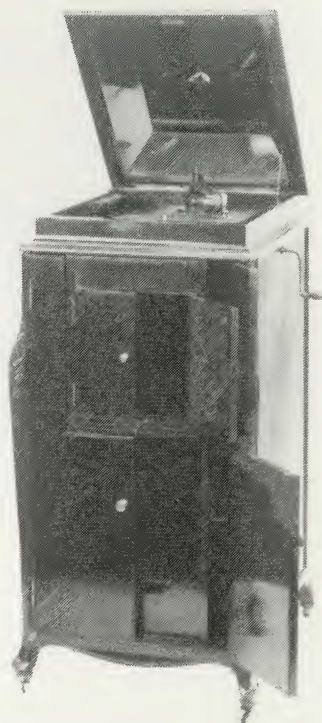
The majority of the evening was given over to a programme on the revival of Mediæval and Renaissance music, given by Mark Morgan. Mark gave us an impressive potted history of the development of this music, illustrated with 78s and LPs from the late 1920s through to the 1970s. To help with what was, for most of us, a 'foreign' language, Mark supplied a translation of the mediæval texts and impressed us further with his ability to speak the language.

Another pleasing aspect of this programme was the use of Eddie Dunn's E.M.G. gramophone for playing the 78s used by Mark in his talk. Another 'first' for the Group and we felt we were listening to an extremely knowledgeable master on his subject. Well done Mark.

Geoff Howl



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